

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

2013-2014 Sportfishing Rules

Rule Proposal Submission Guidelines

This year we are requesting proposals that meet the following criteria:

1. Rules addressing a critical conservation need.

Example: *Puget Sound wild steelhead protection rules, closing river areas or times to protect returning wild steelhead listed under the Endangered Species Act.*

2. Rules providing significant recreational opportunities that generate revenue.

Example: *Open the Lowland Lake Season on the fourth Saturday in April to provide a consistent opening day and to avoid delaying opening day for years with five weekends in April.*

Please note that the department is not currently accepting proposals for Salmon, License types and fees, Pacific Halibut, or Coastal Bottomfish, as these are currently addressed in other forums.

What will not change as part of the Sport Rulemaking Process

Every year during this process we receive rule proposals that need to be addressed in other forums. Below is a list of other processes that affect sportfishing rules, and a little about each of them to help you decide if your proposal should be directed to a different place.

Salmon - Salmon seasons are set through the Pacific Fisheries Management Council/North of Falcon process. This process adopts a cohesive set of rules for sport and commercial salmon fisheries, from ocean fisheries to those inside Puget Sound including freshwater fisheries each year during March and April. You can learn more at the following website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/northfalcon/>

License types and fees - These are set by the Washington State Legislature, and require legislative action for changes. You can contact your state legislators by calling the legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000.

Pacific Halibut - The Pacific Fishery Management Council, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the International Pacific Halibut Commission have the primary responsibility for regulating this fishery. For more information on this process, please call (360) 249-1202.

Coastal Bottomfish – The Pacific Fishery Management Council adopts rules for recreational fishing for bottomfish in coastal waters each fall. These rules can include catch quotas, season length, daily limits, and size limits. State rules are generally adopted to match these rules. For more information, call (360) 249-1202.

Endangered Species Act - Federal rules such as the Endangered Species Act (ESA) also have an effect on sportfishing rules. Areas with fish populations listed as threatened or endangered may have reduced fisheries in order to protect listed species of fish.

Sportfishing Rules for Streams

A group of **basic rules** are used to develop sportfishing rules for the four types of trout populations (non-migratory resident trout, migratory resident trout, steelhead, and sea-run cutthroat and char). The purpose of the basic rules is to allow angler opportunity, while still maintaining healthy populations of wild fish by protecting critical stages of their life history. The basic rules described below work well in most areas of the state. Populations of fish with special needs may require one or more of the **special rules** described below to maintain them at a healthy level.

Basic Stream Rules - these are general rules for trout fishing in streams, rivers, and beaver ponds:

First Saturday in June through October 31 season - the June opening date protects juvenile steelhead, sea-run cutthroat trout, and char by opening after the majority of them have migrated to salt water.

8" minimum size - allows the majority of non-migratory trout to spawn once before harvest and protects juvenile migratory fish.

2 fish daily limit - distributes catch among anglers.

Special Rules for Streams - rules to address special situations or needs. Examples are:

Special seasons - these are used for individual waters to provide additional protection for spawning trout, spawning salmon or steelhead, and/or outmigrant juveniles.

Larger minimum size - a 12" minimum size is often used to protect resident trout in mainstem areas, or for large steelhead smolts in the mid and upper Columbia River and tributaries. A 14" minimum size is used in mainstem river areas with sea-run cutthroat populations to allow them to spawn at least once before harvest. It also provides protection for the larger steelhead smolts. Other minimum sizes are sometimes used if we have specific information about a population that indicates that it requires additional protection.

Dolly Varden/bull trout –native char are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Fisheries for these species must be approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This requires extensive information on the health of a stock before any additional fisheries can be opened.

Catch-and-release/selective fishery regulations - these rules are applied when a population has little or no harvestable surplus, to maintain trout populations similar to natural conditions, or to produce a “quality fishery” with large fish and/or sustained high catch rates.

Sportfishing Rules for Lakes

Lakes, ponds, and reservoirs are managed primarily with hatchery-origin trout or warmwater fish. Many are not capable of supporting natural trout populations.

These seasons provide both a wide variety of recreational opportunities and resource protection, where needed. The standard daily limit is five trout in lakes, with no minimum size. Waters that are managed for natural trout production have minimum size limits, gear restrictions to reduce hooking and handling mortality and reduced daily limits. These regulations are used to meet spawning requirements and to distribute the catch between anglers. Increased daily limits or bonus limits are used to manage kokanee populations at optimal levels in some waters.

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission has adopted eight standard fishing seasons for these waters:

- Open year-round (statewide standard)
- March 1 – July 1
- Fourth Saturday in April – October 31
- Fourth Saturday in April – September 30
- Fourth Saturday in April – February 28
- First Saturday in June – October 31
- December 1 – March 31
- Closed waters year-round

Management Principles - Warmwater Fish

Warmwater fish are all introduced species, transplanted over the last century from the eastern United States. Management emphasis for these species is on maximizing long-term recreational benefits while minimizing impacts to native fish and wildlife populations.

The greatest recreational benefit and least impact is achieved when a balance between predator species (bass, walleye, tiger musky, channel catfish) and prey species (perch, crappie, sunfish) is maintained. Predator species, which tend to be less abundant and more susceptible to over-fishing, are generally managed

with catch, possession and size limits to minimize harvest and maintain predation pressure. This prevents over-population and stunting of prey species.